

The Death of the Idealized Romantic Love Dream in the Great Gatsby: A Synchronized Image with the Funeral Scene

Baker M. Bani-Khair

Assistant Professor of English
English Department
Hashemite University, Jordan

Imad M. Khawaldeh

Assistant Professor of English
English Department
Hashemite University, Jordan

Nisreen Al-khawaldeh

Assistant Professor of Linguistics
English Department
Hashemite University, Jordan

Mohammad Ababneh

Assistant Professor of Spanish Literature
Language Center
Hashemite University, Jordan

Nazmi Alshalabi

Associate Professor of English
English Department
Hashemite University, Jordan

Abstract

Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby is a tremendous novel that suggests many themes as it always strikes the sentimental and emotional side of the reader. However, in this paper, we focus on the idea of idealized love as an essential drive and motif that keeps Gatsby, the major character, following his romantic dream as part of a larger framework within the social background and context of the modern American dream which the novel covers during the era of the roaring twenties of the last century. Therefore, we focus here on the idea of the death of Gatsby's romantic dream which has lost its glamorous side in a greedy and materialistic society. The death of the idealized love dream is noticeable when we look at the synchronized image of love with Gatsby's funeral scene. In other words, Gatsby's dream of love symbolizes the death of love itself. His love towards Daisy and his affinity and admiration of her seems too much idealized, and, therefore, futile, and unreal.

Keywords: Sentimental, Romantic, Idealized, Funeral, materialistic, pursuit

1. Introduction

The Great Gatsby is a sentimental novel that suggests many dreams, and one of which is certainly the American dream. Within the larger framework of the American dream, there is another important and suggestive theme within the novel which is the death of the romantic love dream. Gatsby's love dream seems to take a great part of the novel, but his love is almost futile, unreal, and more like an unattainable imaginary concept. From the very beginning of the novel, Gatsby's shadowy appearance, and his attempts to love and impress Daisy were all absurd, futile and imaginative. Gatsby as a newly rich fellow finds himself in a hypocritical society after living much of his life as a poor person. Levitt in, "The Great Gatsby and Revolution, in Theme and Style," notes the shallowness and hypocrisy of social relations in *Great Gatsby*. He says, "In the third chapter, the first of Gatsby's parties shows us that the fatuity of such social pretension extends to the rich as well." (263) therefore, in a middle of corrupted relationships and hypocritical social environment, Gatsby's parties and attempts to love Daisy remain unique and extraordinary, especially among the rich and upper class people.

The death of the romantic dream is noticeable when we look at the synchronized image of love with Gatsby's funeral scene. In other words, Gatsby's dream of love symbolizes the death of love itself. His love towards Daisy and his affinity and admiration of her seems too much idealized, and, probably unreal. This is clear when Nick Caraway, the narrator says, "I tried to think about Gatsby then for a moment, but he was already too far away, and I could only remember, without resentment, that Daisy hadn't sent a message or a flower. Dimly I heard someone murmur "Blessed are the dead that the rain falls on," and then the owl-eyed man said "Amen to that," in a brave voice." (174)

Gatsby's dream of love appeared from the very beginning more like a shadow, a fantasy, and a farfetched wish. His love dream was associated with failure, despair, and even death during the course of his romantic story. We, as readers, feel attracted to that glittering fantasy of love which, from our points of views, has never existed. Gatsby's romantic love dream was all a fabricated dream which has no grounds in reality. Nick Garraway, the narrator, has explained to us, from the beginning, that Gatsby was all exceptional.

Therefore, Gatsby's idealized character seems to associate Gatsby's dream of love with Daisy from the beginning, which the narrator perpetuates as exceptional. The narrator says: When I came back from the East last autumn I felt that I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever; I wanted no more riotous excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart. Only Gatsby, the man who gives his name to this book, was exempt from my reaction-Gatsby, who represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn. If personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life, as if he were related to one of those intricate machines that register earthquakes ten thousand miles away. The responsiveness had nothing with that flabby impressionability which is dignified under the name of the creative temperament-it was an extra ordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person and which it's not likely I shall ever find again. No-Gatsby turned out all right at the end ; it's what preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and short-winded elations of my family have been prominent, well-to-do people in this Middle Western city for three generations. (2)

2. Discussion and Analysis

Gatsby's romantic dream of love seems to take both the imaginative and the ideal perspectives of love. The ideal perspective of Gatsby's dream seems to dominate Gatsby's dream which is contradictory to that materialistic, shallow, and superficial love that Daisy has for him which all disappeared by the time we see the funeral scene, leaving a shocking and disgusting image in the narrator's memory. Lin and Zheng in "*The Greatness of Gatsby in the Great Gatsby*," note that Daisy's love is different from Gatsby's in terms of its emotional commitment and purity. They explain that Daisy was willing to love many men unlike Gatsby who dedicates all his time and money to impress her, they explain:

Actually, Gatsby did not notice the truth that Daisy did not deserve his love, because she was not a real angel in her heart. She was fickle in love. Daisy talked with men in a low voice so that men would approach her, which was her commonly used trick to attract men. When Nick invited Daisy to have some tea in his home, whose real purpose was to create a meeting chance for Gatsby and Daisy, Daisy asked Nick whether he was sweet on her. In addition, when Daisy saw Nick in Gatsby's party, she told Nick that she would be excited if Nick wanted to kiss her. She was willing to receive his love and she was waiting for his contact anytime. What's more, she was playing with some dissipated men. She was not as serious about love as Gatsby was. (53)

However, Gatsby's materialistic approaches, like the lavish parties he was frequently hosting, were not part of his deeply idealized love dream towards Daisy, but his attempts were all to meet the materialistic attitude of Daisy's dream of love. The imaginary aspect of love in *The Great Gatsby* seems to be as juxtaposition to that dream of idealism that Gatsby and Nick have. From our point of views, we see that Nick's interest in Gatsby's character has to do with that point as they seem to have much in common in terms of their views about characters, love, and life. Nick confesses that Gatsby was the only person who was exempt from his negative perspectives about characters. While Gatsby's character appears to be materialistically glittering, but as we move through reading we discover that Gatsby's materialistic appearance has nothing to do with his view about life. In other words, Gatsby's character is represented to show us how materialism can be as futile and hollow as poverty is. The image of the love dream can better be understood when analyzing the depth of affection and the intimacy Gatsby has towards Daisy and how that sense of ideal love carries the meaning of his own personal pursuit of happiness which does not in any sense correlate with the superficial love that Gatsby has towards Daisy.

Gatsby's materialistic approach in his pursuit of love was all part of his external interest to impress Daisy, but not as an internal drive that comes as a part of Gatsby's interest in materialism. Probably, this explains the reasons behind Gatsby's conservativeness and secretiveness. We do not see Gatsby mingles with people in his parties he was frequently hosting. We only see his shadow as if he was watching and criticizing how silly and futile these parties are. Probably, Gatsby is watching himself and observing how his dream of loving Daisy would be as futile as those parties. Since Daisy was attracted to the superficial appearance of Gatsby's character including wealth and glamour, Gatsby was tracking the ways that could make Daisy happier in life although he is completely dissatisfied with materialistic and superficial world and sulking in his ideal dreams. It is worth noting here that Gatsby's romantic dream has never come to an end throughout the whole novel until we reach the funeral scene, and then we learn about Gatsby's death, which suddenly comes to end all these fruitless pursuits of ideal love. This actually explains that Gatsby's romantic dream was not the love of Daisy as a lover, but it was much deeper than that. It was the dream of idealism, the dream of the ideal love which is, from the narrator's point of view, was buried with Gatsby in the funeral scene leaving behind the ugliest images of materialism, superficiality, and corruption. However, Gatsby's dream of love was lost by the end of the novel exactly as a flashing daydream, the narrator explains, "somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark field of the republic rolled on under the night"

Gatsby was sure that Daisy's love for him is no more than an illusion that has no ground on the ideal reality which he continuously dreams to achieve. Gatsby's cling to his dream of the ideal love is much more powerful than the physical and materialistic motives that Daisy has made to make love. This idea is obviously seen when we analyze the dialogue between Gatsby and Tom while Daisy was listening and never defending Gatsby or even confirming his words, as we see in this passage:

Oh you want too much, she cried to Gatsby. " I love you now-isn't that enough? I can't help what is past. "She began to sob helplessly. I did love him once-but I loved you too." Gatsby's eyes opened and closed. You loved me too? He repeated. Even that is a lie, said Tom savagely. She didn't know you were alive. Why- there're things between Daisy and me that you will never know, things that neither of us can ever forget. The words seemed to bite physically into Gatsby. I want to speak to Daisy alone, "he insisted. She is all excited now."Even alone, I can't say I never loved Tom, she admitted in a pitiful voice. It wouldn't be true. Of course, it wouldn't, agreed Tom. She turned to her husband, as if it mattered to you, she said. (133)

3. Gatsby's Ideal Dream

Daisy's failure to express her love to Gatsby was not because she was afraid of Tom, but it was because she never saw in Gatsby the love she wants until he goes back again with a new shape, a richer fortune. But she also finds in Tom the materialistic side of life—the glittering superficiality that she could not find in Gatsby. While Gatsby's dream was an ideal romantic dream, Daisy's dream was much more glamorous and materialistic one. I think that Daisy's and Gatsby's love will never meet at all due to the absence of congruence. Probably, Gatsby's dream was not winning "Daisy" and her love as it only appears to be, but it was beyond that. It was the dream of making love that has never been made reality. Gatsby's dreams might seemingly appear hollow and shallow as Lock ridge suggests in his book, *Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Great Gatsby*, Lock ridge states, "Similarly, the ambiguity of Gatsby' himself comes over to us in these terms. He is not the simple antithesis of Tom and Daisy; he is implicated in their kind of corruption too, and his dream is proved hollow not only by the inadequacy of the actual correlative—that is, Daisy—to the hunger of his aspiring imagination, but also by the means he uses to build up the gaudy fabric of his vision. He, too, shares in the restlessness of the actual world which will defeat his ideal, platonic conceptions." (98) Seemingly, Gatsby's materialistic approaches to impress Daisy might appear corrupt as the other kinds of corruptions we see in the novel. As a matter of fact, Gatsby has got the moral and ethical characteristics which distinguish him from many others we see in the novel. Gatsby's approach remains the most intriguing and amazing thing in the novel. Ivana Nakic Licic notes the special characteristics of Gatsby and the enigmatic character which makes him different from other characters in love, she explains "Gatsby is a character with mythical, legendary characteristics, the information about his past comes through speculations, and Gatsby himself doesn't reveal his origin, supporting the thesis that for making success the origin doesn't matter. Gatsby's visual characterization borders on travesty, he leaves an ironic Impression in his pink suit next to the other representatives of the rich class clad in white, which reveals their slackness and lack of emotions." (70)

However, Gatsby's vision has never been materialistic or corrupt, and that his platonic conceptions of love have never changed up to the very end of the novel. This notion is quite obvious when we perceive his repeated endeavors to access Daisy's heart early from the very beginning. What is more intriguing in the novel, from our points of view, is the sense of hope that the novel suggests toward the end. Despite Daisy's faithless love for Gatsby, Gatsby has never abandoned his ideal romantic love for Daisy, and was all waiting for Daisy as he has always been waiting. Possibly, Gatsby's waiting for Daisy from the very beginning is supporting the idea of his ideal love. We never see Gatsby loses that sense, even at the very moments before his death, Gatsby was expecting Daisy to contact him, to send him a telephone message, but he soon realized that his dream of love is all gone away exactly as his life continues to wane and fade, and what he has been living for is all done. As we see in this passage when the narrator explains to us how Gatsby was still clinging to his dream even after he knew the truth, the narrator says:

No telephone message arrived, but the butler went without his sleep and waited for it until four o'clock—until long after there was anyone to give it to if it came. I have an idea that Gatsby himself didn't believe it would come, and perhaps he no longer cared. If that was true he must have felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream. He must have looked up at an unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves and shivered as he found what a grotesque thing a rose is and how raw the sun light was upon the scarcely created grass. A new world material without being real, where poor ghosts, breathing dreams like air, drifted fortuitously about...like that ashen, fantastic figure gliding toward him through the amorphous trees. (161) When we analyze the previous passage, we really sense how Gatsby's dream of love began to fall down signifying the smash of Gatsby's character where his dream of love alluding to the impending death and doom. This is perhaps what the narrator meant when he says, "He must have looked up at an unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves and shivered as he found what a grotesque thing a rose is and how raw the sun light was upon the scarcely created grass"(161). This image actually leaves the space to think of the illusion of the ideal love leading the reader to foretell the death of Gatsby and the end of Gatsby's mission and struggle for dreams which he could never make them come true, and that he has no longer have the place in this life. Gatsby's contemplation of nature here is certainly heralding the end of his journey that has never reached a point, and that the next destination will be all with nature where one belongs.

Furthermore, Gatsby's aspirations of idealism makes his love appear as a representative of the American dream which, from our points of view, symbolizes more the sentimental as well as the spiritual purity of the soul opposing the mundane materialism represented by Tom's character. Gatsby's character might be misunderstood when it is read superficially and analyzed in the light of the materialistic attempts, which he uses to impress Daisy, but for more profound reading Gatsby seems to us much more a symbol for idealism, romanticism, pure love, and probably, ethics. Gatsby wants his love to be an ideal relationship that is based on truth, decency and sacrifice which is not based on materialism as it might seems to us. However, Gatsby's idealism and faith has to encounter all that hollowness and emptiness of Daisy's materialism. Thus, I think that Gatsby's love can only and exclusively represent the American dream if we suppose that Gatsby's love is all spiritual and pure as it appears to its contrary picture of love represented by other characters in the novel such as Daisy herself, Tom Buchanan, and Myrtle. The shadowy appearance of Gatsby, and the very little information we know about him, in addition, to his mysterious death, and the few number of people we see at his funeral make us imagine that Gatsby has never existed, and all what is left to us is the narrator's judgment of him as being exceptional. Gholipour and Sanahmadi notify the significance of psychological attachments represented as love relations in the novel which they describe as unrealistic and "dysfunctional." They state, "almost all romantic bonds in the novel, even Tom and Daisy's, either manifest a hollow emotional attachment or have worn out miserably since the characters fail to relive the painful experience of the unconscious, break down all defense mechanisms to release the repressed, and exploit the scopes of gratification offered by ego, the world of reality. The unresolved conflicts in the characters' psyche in the novel, in this sense, therefore, bespeak the work's consideration as a psychological drama of dysfunctional love" (52)

4. *The Death of Gatsby's Ideal Dream: The Funeral Scene*

Gatsby's dream has never come into being, and his ideal love dream was buried with him under the ground, abandoning all these false materialistic desires, but also leaving us with big questions to ask. Probably, Gatsby's idealistic love is one of the mysteries of the title of the novel itself, and that Gatsby's greatness has never been fully understood exactly as his dream was. Gatsby's waiting for his dream represented by Daisy's love has never come into being, and the result was the death of the dream as we see in his funeral scene. However, even after we see how the ideal love dream has been put to an end by the time we reach the funeral scene, Gatsby's vision remains alive in the narrator's memory who consistently keeps telling his story to us. The narrator keeps narrating how Gatsby's story of ideal love was just as extraordinary as his ideal view about love. Probably, this vision is the thing that clings to our minds reminding us of the extent of the moral as well as the sentimental dimensions of the novel with all that richness of emotions and illusions. Lehan writes about this richness of sentimentality in the novel, he explains to us that *The Great Gatsby* is all a novel that tells us both a past dream with a future vision, and that vision can't be separated from illusion and idealism, he says, "The great Gatsby is thus a novel about intense romantic commitment without the physical and moral embodiment for such commitment. It is a novel about the romantic intensity of self-divorced from an object, of ideal separated from reality, vision inseparable from illusion, ideals are located in an exhausted past that gives the future all the palpability of a mirage" (33)

The richness of Gatsby's dream, from our points of view, lies in the possibility that genuine and ideal love cannot exist where the love of materialism can be the norm and the love of idealism can only be the exception. We really think that the narrator has meant this notion when he refers to Gatsby as exceptional. While the characters were overwhelmed with materialistic desires and the love of money which can buy them luxury and lust, Gatsby remains mostly conscious of his materialistic wealth because he believes that his wealth never brings him any satisfaction, unlike the other characters who can just go happy with it. Probably Gatsby's failure of romantic love in both cases while being poor and rich, is a big example that ideal love is only a dream for all people rich and poor, and that love can never be bought with money nor can it be necessarily achieved with wealth. This philosophical approach that Gatsby's character represents to us is all placed within the meaning of the spiritual love and how that can just be an unattainable dream.

5. *Conclusion*

Daisy is part of the materialistic world around her. To her, Gatsby is no longer a satisfactory dream because in her eyes he seems much more alienated than the others who live in her world. Daisy does not have the internal motivation to be out of the norm, out of that dominant social context in which she lives in and that Gatsby at the end all appears to her as strange, dead, and exotic despite that glittering transformation in his external status after being absent for a while. As Lehan explains in "*The Great Gatsby the Limits of Wonder*", he states: It is Daisy Fay who becomes the incarnation of his romantic ideal: Daisy, five years married to Tom Buchanan; Daisy who will at last resort protect herself no matter who or what she has to abandon; daisy, who lacks maturity, intrinsic worth, or solidity of character. And why should she be better than the world of which she is a part? It is Gatsby who endows her with a meaning that she could in no way embody. (31)

For a more profound reading of the novel, one might find the opposite picture. As Lehan suggests that *The Great Gatsby* has always something new when we read it, he clarifies "On a personal note, I can say that I have read this novel well over one hundred times, and every time I reread it, I find that I am seeing that I had previously missed. Few novels particularly those so seemingly simple on the surface hold up so well and have the ability to continually surprise us. *The Great Gatsby* seems larger than the criteria that we bring to its evaluation; whatever we say about it seems never complete or satisfactory enough. It's a novel that has continually proved itself larger than its many critics, which is perhaps what we mean when we speak of it as a masterpiece." (15)

Finally, I would like to refer here to the point that reading *The Great Gatsby* for the first time might pose to us the idea that love was all material, and that Gatsby himself has failed in his romantic love because of his materialistic approach of loving Daisy, which, in fact, could not buy him love. Gatsby's dream does not begin when he becomes rich, but it was his dream when he was also poor. Gatsby's romantic love dream remains the only vision that keeps flashing in the novel. From our point of views, Gatsby's ideal vision and dream of love has never stopped floating on the surface until we reach the funeral scene that awakes us from that ideal dream which Gatsby has never given up.

References

- Fitzgerald, F. Scott. (1953). *the Great Gatsby*. New York: Scribner.
- Gholipour, Mojtaba, Sanahamadi, Mina. (2013). "A Psychoanalytic Attitude to The Great Gatsby". *International Journal of Humanities and Management sciences*, Vol 1.1.
- Lehan, Richard Daniel. (1990). *The Great Gatsby: The Limits of Wonder*. Boston: Twayne.
- Levitt, Paul. (2011). "The Great Gatsby and Revolution, in Theme and Style." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol 1. No 17.
- Li, Qin, Zheng Lili. (2015). "The Greatness of Gatsby in The Great Gatsby". *Advances in Literary Studies*, Vol 3: 52-57.
- Lockridge, Ernest. (1968). *Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Great Gatsby: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Print.
- Lucic Ivana. (2014). "The American Dream in "The Great Gatsby" by F.S. Fitzgerald". *International Journal of Languages and Literatures*, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 67-76